

plumage differences. No signs of plumage intergradation have been reported although the two forms occur within a few km of one another, such as on either side of the mouth of the Bío-Bío river (Behn 1944, Ridgely & Tudor 1994). These plumage differences are greater than those among any subspecies and many closely related species of tapaculos. The two forms also occupy slightly different habitats. Thus we recommend that the doubt surrounding the species status of the Chestnut-throated Huet-Huet *P. castaneus* be removed, and that it be considered a full species, separate from the Black-throated Huet-Huet *P. tarnii*.

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A critique of Walters' (1993) new bird records from Belize

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Walters (1993) reported records of six species of birds from Belize (formerly British Honduras), Central America, based primarily on birds banded between 1960 and 1964 by W. P. Nickell. Although five of these species would represent first records for the country, a review of the records in a wider context casts doubt upon their authenticity. It should be remembered, however, that during the early 1960s little or no

literature was available to correctly identify Central American birds in the field, or to evaluate the significance of such records.

NORTHERN PYGMY-OWL *Glaucidium gnoma*

Walters (1993) reported two records of birds banded in the vicinity of Mountain Pine Ridge, which he claimed to be an area of "highland pine forest". He considered the records "not unexpected" since *G. gnoma* occurs in the highlands of Guatemala and Honduras.

Elevations in Mountain Pine Ridge "range from 1000 to 3000 feet" (i.e. 300–900 m) (Russell 1964) and, despite the dominance of pines (*Pinus caribaea*, a species common at sea level in northern Central America), the avifauna is distinctly tropical, or at best marginally subtropical. Also, the two localities noted by Walters (1993), San Antonio and Guacamallo Bridge, are at lower elevations around the periphery of Mountain Pine Ridge proper, where pines meet humid evergreen forest. Species common at these sites include many widespread tropical lowland species such as White Hawk *Leucopternis albicollis*, Scaled Pigeon *Columba speciosa*, and Barred Antshrike *Thamnophilus doliatus* (pers. obs.). Further, the Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl *G. brasiliannum* is common around San Antonio, as it is throughout the pines of Mountain Pine Ridge (pers. obs.), and the Central American Pygmy-Owl *G. griseiceps* (Howell & Robbins 1995), a representative of the Least Pygmy-Owl complex, would also be expected at Guacamallo Bridge. The only Belize record for Least Pygmy-Owl noted by Russell (1964) was from "Southern [=Mountain] Pine Ridge". (This species is characteristic of lowland rain forest (Howell & Robbins 1995) and is not common in Mountain Pine Ridge, as stated erroneously by Wood *et al.* (1986).)

Although in Guatemala *G. gnoma* has been reported from 400–2600 m (Land 1970), this lower elevational limit is almost certainly in error, probably based upon Griscom (1931, 1932) who confused distinctions between the Northern and Least (*G. minutissimum*) pygmy-owl groups and mistakenly lumped the two. Records of *G. gnoma* from Honduras are from 1700–2000 m (Monroe 1968) and the species' elevational range in southern Mexico is 2000–3000 m (Binford 1989, pers. obs.) which probably reflects its true distribution in Guatemala. Throughout its range, *G. gnoma* is a bird of temperate habitats. Thus I question the identification of birds banded in Belize as *G. gnoma*, a highland species otherwise unknown from that country, and which would, *contra* Walters (1993), be highly unexpected in tropical pine woods.

WESTERN WOOD-PEWEE *Contopus sordidulus*

The only prior report of this species from Belize is for December 1881 (Russell 1964, Wood *et al.* 1986). Since Western Pewees migrate primarily through the highlands of Mexico and Central America, and winter in South America (A.O.U. 1983, Howell & Webb 1995), this record is highly questionable, being out of range and out of season (e.g. the latest autumn date for Honduras is 11 October; Monroe 1968). Further, separation, even in the hand, of the sibling Western Pewee

and Eastern Pewee (*C. virens*; a common passage migrant in Belize from early March to mid May) can be extremely difficult, and is not always possible (Pyle *et al.* 1986).

The record reported by Walters (1993), and indeed this species' place on the Belize list, is best considered hypothetical.

CASSIN'S KINGBIRD *Tyrannus vociferans*

This species winters south in the interior and on the Pacific Slope of Middle America to northwestern Guatemala, rarely to Honduras (A.O.U. 1983, Howell & Webb 1995); it is rarely recorded as a vagrant in well-watched areas of eastern North America (A.O.U. 1983). The basis for the Belize record listed by Wood *et al.* (1986) is unclear (D. S. Wood *in litt.*) and consequently the reports of Walters (1993) would constitute the first records for Belize.

Although the occurrence of Cassin's Kingbird in Belize is possible, I suggest that the species' place on the Belize list, including the five undocumented records listed by Walters (1993), be considered hypothetical, since no other observers have reported this species from Belize; Cassin's Kingbird is known from one record in Honduras (whence, presumably, spring migrants to Belize would originate); and field identification of kingbirds has been treated inadequately in bird guides for Mexico and Central America.

WESTERN KINGBIRD *Tyrannus verticalis*

While this species, which winters on the Pacific slope and in the interior of Middle America south to Costa Rica, could occur as a vagrant to Belize, its presence on the Belize list should be confirmed by more than an undocumented banding report from an observer responsible for other questionable records.

GREY KINGBIRD *Tyrannus dominicanus*

The two records reported by Walters (1993) fit into the pattern of two well-documented recent records (Howell *et al.* 1992), with all four occurring from 17 March to 3 April, and thus may have been identified correctly.

HUTTON'S VIREO *Vireo huttoni*

Hutton's Vireo has been attributed traditionally as occurring in Mountain Pine Ridge, Belize, based on an 1888 specimen (Russell 1964, Wood *et al.* 1986). However, Phillips (1992) examined this anomalous specimen and found that it is a Solitary Vireo *V. solitarius*, a small race of which has long been known as a resident in Mountain Pine Ridge. Thus there is no evidence for the presence of Hutton's Vireo in Belize, and its occurrence there is at best highly unlikely on biogeographic grounds.

Walters' (1993) reports of Hutton's Vireo from the southern hardwood forests of Belize, a habitat unknown for the species, are thus not credible. Perhaps, like the old specimen, they may refer to the Solitary Vireo, an apparently resident population of which was

reported recently from the hardwood forests of southern Belize (Parker *et al.* 1993).

The questions surrounding the above records highlight the danger of relying on undocumented banding records from poorly known tropical localities and show that, even though a bird has been examined in the hand, it may not have been identified correctly. It also may be noted that the only two reports of Orange-crowned Warbler *Vermivora celata* from Belize, correctly considered hypothetical by Russell (1964), are birds captured for banding by Nickell in 1961.

Thus the reports of *Glaucidium gnoma* and *Vireo huttoni* reported by Walters (1993) surely refer to misidentified birds, while the reports of *Tyrannus vociferans*, *T. verticalis* and *Contopus sordidulus* are at best considered hypothetical. I thank Stephen M. Russell for reviewing a copy of this note.

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